

UNITED STATES PATENT APPLICATION

FOR

**SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR MERGING STREAMING
AND STORED CONTENT INFORMATION IN AN
ELECTRONIC PROGRAM GUIDE**

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**SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR MERGING STREAMING
AND CACHED CONTENT INFORMATION IN AN
ELECTRONIC PROGRAM GUIDE**

Field of the Invention

[001] The invention relates generally to electronic program guides and, more specifically, to an electronic program guide that includes information about streaming content and stored content.

Background of the Invention

[002] Broadcast systems traditionally transmit data to a plurality of client systems such that the data is broadcast at known times. Users of the client systems typically receive the signals from the server system as they are broadcast. In some systems, such as on cable and satellite television systems, an electronic program guide may be broadcast that contains information about programs and when they will be broadcast. Some systems also provide "pay per view" movies. "Pay per view" movies are available from cable or satellite television providers that broadcast the same movies repeatedly on multiple channels at staggered intervals. Users that wish to watch a particular movie simply tune in to one of the channels on which the desired movie is broadcast at a particular known broadcast time.

[003] Users may control when they view broadcast content by recording the content for later viewing a more desirable time. In this way, a user may record a particular program, movie, sporting event, etc. to later view it "on demand" at a time after it was broadcast. Traditionally, this may be achieved by a user setting a video cassette recorder (VCR) to record a desired television program. Recently, digital video recorders paired with digital broadcast services provided by TiVo, Inc. of Alviso, California and Replay TV, Inc. of Mountain View, California have become available. These paired device and service offerings allow for television and movie

broadcasts to be recorded on internal hard disk drives rather than the video cassette tapes used by traditional VCRs. The use of digital video recorders is similar to traditional VCRs in that users choose which broadcasts are to be recorded on the internal hard drives by specifying a date and time of a desired program based on an electronic program guide provided by the broadcast system. To view a stored broadcast, the user of a digital video recorder may select from a menu of stored programs in the form of an electronic program guide of locally stored data.

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BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[007] **Figure 1** illustrates an environment in which one embodiment of the invention executes. The invention involves a broadcast center server 110 that receives data from at least one content provider 100 and forwards digital data to at least one client depicted as computing device 120. In one embodiment, broadcast center server 110 may receive content as digital data or analog data. If analog data is received, it is converted into an appropriate digital format before being forwarded to clients. Although only one client, computing device 120, is depicted, the invention involves multiple clients in the form of multiple computing devices. Content provider 100 may be a server computer or a group, subnetwork, local area network (LAN) or other group of multiple computers. The data may be any educational, instructional, informational, or entertainment content in a digital format including, but not limited to, a television program, movie, short, raw data, voice, audio, video, music, graphics, video game, or some combination of these or other similar data. When the content is received from the content providers as analog data, it may be in any well-known or proprietary analog format, such as the National Television System Committee (NTSC) format. The format of the content sent to the clients and received from the content providers may be any digital data format including, for example, data interchange formats such as Internet Protocol (IP) Packets and File Transfer Protocol (FTP) packets; combined audio and moving video formats such as the Digital Video Interface (DVI) format, Indeo® format, formats promulgated by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), the Advanced Television Systems Committee (ATSC), and similar organizations such as High Definition Television (HDTV), Moving Pictures Expert Group (MPEG) format; related audio formats; still video formats such as Joint Photographic Experts Group (JPEG) format, Graphic Interchange Format (GIF), etc. In one embodiment, the content provider provides the

content via connections 104. In one embodiment, connections 104 may be land lines such as T1 lines, T3 lines, coaxial cable, Ethernet, twisted-pair, fiber optic such as a Synchronous Optical Network (SONET), or other any physically present connection capable of delivering high-speed digital data. In another embodiment, the connection may be wireless in the form of microwave, satellite, radio waves, and the like.

[008] Broadcast center server 110 may be a server computer or a group of computers including a subnetwork or a LAN. Broadcast center server 110 distributes digital data to clients, shown as computing device 120, over communication link 116. Communication link 116 may be any means of broadcasting digital data, including, wirelessly via a digital television (DTV) signal, microwave and satellite transmission, and land lines such as digital subscriber line (DSL), T1, T3, SONET, and cable television (CATV).

[009] Clients receive digital data via a computing device such as a set-top box, digital video recorder, digital network recorder, personal computer, portable computer, cellular telephone, personal digital assistant (PDA), computing tablet, or any other similar device. In one embodiment, computing device 120 includes a communications interface 122 that allows for the receipt of high-speed digital data such as a cable modem, DSL modem, Ethernet interface, satellite receiver, etc. Computing device 120 also includes a non-volatile storage device 128 for storing received digital data for later access. Such storage devices include magnetic media such as hard disk drives and may include other machine readable media such as optical disks, card and stick memory devices, flash memory devices, and the like. In one embodiment, the invention is included in computing device 120 as software that is stored on storage device 128 or other machine readable medium and is executed by processor 124 which utilizes memory 126. Processor 124 may be any processor, and

memory 126 may be any kind of random access memory (RAM) or other form of memory.

[0010] The computing device processes received digital data and sends a resulting signal via display adapter 134 to a display 140 to be presented to a viewer. Communications interface 122, processor 124, memory 126, storage device 128, and display adapter 134 are, in one embodiment, coupled to bus 130. In various embodiments, computing device 120 may include multiple communications interfaces, processors, storage devices, display adapters, and buses, as well as other components, not shown. In various embodiments, computing device 120 may include an audio processor and/or a game processor or game interface. Although not shown, display 140 may include audio speakers and user input devices such as a remote control, game pad, game controller, joystick, mouse, keyboard, etc. Display 140 may be a cathode ray tube (CRT) display monitor, a thin film transistor (TFT) display screen, liquid crystal display (LCD), or any display device suitable for displaying graphics and images.

[0011] In one embodiment, information describing the content of digital data that is to be delivered is delivered as program guide data in advance of the actual content that will later be delivered. The description data or program guide data may also be paired with the content when the digital data is delivered. Program guide data may be delivered in various formats, including, but not limited to, the formats specified by the Program and System Information Protocol for Terrestrial Broadcast and Cable (PSIP) of the ATSC, revision A and the Specification for Service Information in DVB Systems (SI) of the European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI) of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) version 1.4.1.

[0012] In one embodiment, the client is a computing device in the form of a smart set-top box and/or digital video recorder through which a user effectively places

invokes the appropriate content manager to provide the requested stored content to the user, as shown in block 364. Execution may then continue at either block 350 or 344.

[0018] The coordinator may receive a request to provide details regarding stored content, as shown in block 370. If so, the coordinator provides the stored content details to the user, as shown in block 374. The stored content details amount to program guide information that may be referred to as stored content description information. In another embodiment, the coordinator may invoke the appropriate content manager to provide the stored content details to the user. Execution may then continue at either block 350 or 344.

[0019] The coordinator may receive a request to provide streaming content, as shown in block 380. If so, the coordinator invokes the appropriate content manager to provide the requested streaming content to the user, as shown in block 384. The coordinator may cause the computing device to access the appropriate channel or signal according to any well known techniques. Execution may then continue at either block 350 or 344.

[0020] The coordinator may receive a request to provide details about a current or future program or other content, as shown in block 390. If so, the coordinator provides the requested details to the user, as shown in block 394. Execution may then continue at either block 350 or 344. These details amount to program guide information that may be referred to as streaming content description data.

[0021] In addition, although not pertinent to the invention, the user may apply commands to streaming or stored content such as fast forward, fast backwards, volume up, volume down, faster, slower, pause, freeze frame, etc., depending on the content.

[illegible]